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For Immediate Release

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Insurance Commissioner and Attorney General Announce Conviction For Automobile Insurance Fraud

April 8, 2008 - Attorney General Kelly A. Ayotte and Insurance Commissioner Roger A. Seigny announced today the conviction of Travis Powell for Insurance Fraud. Powell submitted a claim for automobile insurance benefits for an accident that actually predated his insurance policy.

Powell, age 32, of Kensington, NH, pled guilty to one count of Insurance Fraud under RSA 638:20 before Judge Tina L. Nadeau at the Rockingham County Superior Court. He was sentenced to 6 months in the Rockingham County House of Corrections, suspended for three years. The suspension is expressly conditioned upon good behavior, payment of a \$2000 fine and the writing of an apology letter to Progressive Northern Insurance Company ("Progressive"). Powell was given the option of performing community service in lieu of the fine.

"Insurance fraud is like a tax on every New Hampshire citizen. I intend to vigorously pursue criminal prosecution of this crime to protect the citizens of this state," said Insurance Commissioner Seigny. Attorney General Ayotte said, "We will continue to work with the Insurance Department to diligently prosecute insurance fraud, even failed attempts to defraud, such as this one. Offenders need to be held accountable and receive the message that this type of crime exacts a price on all of society."

The conviction resulted after Powell purchased an automobile insurance policy with Progressive on March 29, 2006. Pursuant to this insurance policy, Powell made a claim to Progressive for payment for damage to an air-condensing unit. Powell stated that the air-condensing unit was damaged when he slid into it with his truck on April 3rd or April 4th; Powell provided this information to the claim adjuster in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Actually, the accident occurred before Powell applied for the insurance policy. Powell acted knowingly and with a purpose to deceive or defraud Progressive.

The repair bill for the air-condensing unit amounted to over \$2000. The fraud was uncovered prior to any claim being paid out.

The charge is a Class A felony, which carries a maximum penalty of 7 ½ - 15 years incarceration and a fine of \$4000.

The claim was investigated for Progressive by Ralph Gault, from Progressive's Special Investigations Unit, and was then referred to the New Hampshire Insurance Department Fraud Unit for criminal investigation. Fraud Unit Investigator Thomas Wickey conducted the Insurance Department's investigation. The case was prosecuted by Insurance Fraud Prosecutor Catherine Tucker.

The conviction is the result of a joint effort by the Attorney General's Office and the Insurance Department Fraud Unit. The Fraud Unit was formed under RSA 417:23 to investigate Insurance Fraud and other insurance-related criminal activity. The collaboration between the Insurance Department and the Department of Justice in investigating and prosecuting insurance fraud crimes is unique.

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